

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
/072 W

-----071267 211951Z /43

R 211235Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL NICE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1511
AMEMBASSY PARIS
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS NICE 120

E.O. 11652 : N/A
TAGS : PINT, FR
SUBJECT : ELECTION IN NICE CONSULAR DISTRICT
REF : NICE 101, PARIS 7755

1. SUMMARY - WITH TURNOUT SURPASSING 88 & IN SOME DISTRICTS
THE VOTERS IN THIS AREA RETURNED THE MAJORITY TO OFFICE.
OF THE FOURTEEN SEATS IN THE NICE CONSULAR DISTRICT TWELVE
ARE NOW HELD BY THE MAJORITY. THE PC CAPTURED ONE SEAT
AND THE RADICAL LEFT ONE SEAT (BOTH IN THE ALPES DE HAUTE
PROVENCE). END SUMMARY.

2. SKI SLOPES WERE DESERTED AS FRENCH VOTERS IN THIS CORNER
OF FRANCE WENT TO THE POLLS IN RECORD NUMBERS. IN MOST
DISTRICTS THOSE ABSTAINING WERE LESS THAN 12 PER CENT OF THE
REGISTERED VOTERS. THIS WAS AN AVERAGE OF 4 - 5 PER CENT
INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF MAINLAND VOTERS OVER THE FIRST ROUND.
ALTHOUGH DIFFICULT TO TELL FROM THE PUBLISHED STATISTICS
IT APPEARS THAT IN ALL BUT THE ALPES DE HAUTE PROVENCE
MOST OF THESE NEW VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR MAJORITY
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CANDIDATES. THESE STATISTICS ALSO INDICATE THAT MANY
VOTING SOCIALIST AND ECOLOGIST IN THE FIRST ROUND DID NOT
VOTE FOR PC CANDIDATES REPRESENTING THE LEFT IN THE SECOND ROUND.

3. BEFORE MARCH 19 THE LEFT HELD FIVE SEATS (INCLUDING
CORSICA) PLUS BERNARD CORNUT-GENTILE, MAYOR OF CANNES
WHO WAS SANS ETIQUETTE BUT VOTED WITH THE LEFT IN THE

ASSEMBLY. THE BIGGEST UPSET WAS HIS LOSS TO MRS LOUISE MOREAU OF THE CENTRE DES DEMOCRATES SOCIAUX. SENSING THIS THE MAYOR OF CANNES ISSUED A WARNING JUST BEFORE THE ELECTION THAT THE LOSS OF HIS DEPUTY SEAT WOULD JEOPARDIZE HIS ABILITY TO CONTINUE HIS DUTIES AS MAYOR. THE MOVE FAILED AND MAY HAVE BACKFIRED AS HE WAS UNABLE TO CARRY SOME PARTS OF CANNES. ON MONDAY MARCH 20 CORNUT-GENTILLE ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION AS MAYOR OF CANNES. WHO WILL SUCCEED HIM IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS POINT.

4. CORSICA - THIS IS NOW GAULLIST COUNTRY WITH THE RPR WINNING ALL FOUR SEATS. THE ELECTION WAS A SHARP REVERSE FOR THE MRG WHICH HAD HELD TWO SEATS AND HAD EXPECTED TO WIN THE NEW CORTE-CALVI DISTRICT. MRG SENATOR FRANCOIS GIACOBBI WAS THE CORTE-CALVI LEFT CANDIDATE IN THE SECOND ROUND AND NEARLY EVERYONE BELIEVED HE WOULD EASILY WIN. VOTING PERCENTAGE WAS NOT AS HIGH AS ON THE MAINLAND BUT THE NUMBER ABSTAINING DROPPED FROM ABOUT 30 PER CENT TO ABOUT 13 PER CENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS. SOME OF THE ABSTENTION WAS UNDOUBTEDLY DUE TO THE CALL BY AUTONOMISTS TO ABSTAIN AND THE LOCAL PS DECISION TO NOT ENDORSE MRG CANDIDATES. THIS PS DECISION WAS LARGELY THE RESULT OF THE MRG REFUSAL TO SUPPORT A STATUT PARTICULIER FOR CORSICA.

5. THE SOCIALIST PARTY WHICH SHOWED SIGN OF REVIVAL LOCALLY IN THE FIRST ROUND FAILED TO CARRY THIS TREND THROUGH
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THE SECOND ROUND. MOST LEFT CANDIDATES IN THE SECOND ROUND WERE PC OR MRG MEMBERS. LOCAL OBSERVERS ARE PREDICTING THAT THE PS WILL NOT BE A VIABLE PARTY FOR SOME TIME TO COME IN THIS REGION AND THAT ON A NATIONAL LEVEL PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TROUBLE HOLDING THE PARTY TOGETHER.

6. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT VOTERS HERE CONSIDERED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS ELECTION ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL ACTS OF THEIR LIVES. THE RESULTS REFLECT THE CENTER/RIGHT PERSUASION OF MOST OF THE LOCAL VOTERS. FOLLOWING ARE STATISTICS ON THE OUTCOME/CHANGES :

MAJORITY RPR : 6, UDF : 6 FOR TOTAL OF 12 WHICH IS A GAIN OF 5 SEATS (RPR GAINED 3 AND UDF GAINED 2).
LEFT PC : 1, MRG : 1 FOR TOTAL OF 2 WHICH IS A LOSS OF 4 SEATS (MRG LOST 2, PS LOST 1 AND NON-INSCRIT LEFT LOST 1).

NOTE : PRIOR TO THE ELECTION CORSICA HAD 3 CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS : CORSICA GAINED A FOURTH DEPUTY AS OF MARCH 19, 1978.

7. OF REGIONAL INTEREST IS THE LOSS BY THE PS OF ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE PROVENCE-ALPES-COTE D AZUR REGIONAL COUNCIL (SIX DEPARTMENTS : ALPES MARITIMES,

ALPES DE HAUTE PROVENCE, HAUTES ALPES, BOUCHES DU RHONE,
VAR AND VAUCLUSE) AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTION. THE TENDENCY
HERE IS TO REGARD THE REGIONAL MAKEUP AS FAVORING THE
MARSEILLE AREA. THE PS DOMINATION OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL
ONLY REINFORCED THIS VIEW.

WHAT COALITION WILL BE WORKED OUT IS UNCLEAR BUT MUST
INVOLVE PS-PC OR PS-MAJORITY IN SOME ARRANGEMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, ELECTIONS, CONSULAR DISTRICTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NICE00120
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780124-0998
Format: TEL
From: NICE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780343/aaaabjuc.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 833661c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 NICE 101, 78 PARIS 7755
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3256072
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION IN NICE CONSULAR DISTRICT
TAGS: PINT, FR
To: STATE PARIS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/833661c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014